



NEWS RELEASE

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Prescription Frequency for ADHD Studied in Utah Children

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The rate at which stimulants are prescribed to treat children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Utah is within the range of use nationally, according to a recent Utah Department of Health (UDOH) study. UDOH researchers found that in 2002, 4.7 percent of children ages 5-14 years in Utah received a prescription for a stimulant medication, such as Ritalin. Prescription rates for this age group in other states ranged from 1.6 to 6.5 percent with an average of 4.3 percent.

Even though stimulants are the most effective medication for managing ADHD symptoms, questions have arisen about how often they are prescribed for children. “It’s important to document the actual rate of stimulant medications prescribed in Utah since our state has been described as having a high rate of Ritalin use,” says George Delavan, M.D., director of UDOH’s Community and Family Health Services Division. “We now know how we compare with other states and we will monitor for trends in prescription use in the future.”

Data for the study came from the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing which collects and tracks controlled drugs dispensed by all retail, institutional, outpatient hospital pharmacies, and pharmacies. The UDOH analyzed 138,456 stimulant medication prescriptions for children 0-18 years of age during 2002. The majority of the prescriptions (57%) were for methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta). Close to 30 percent were for amphetamine (Adderall) and approximately 14 percent were for dextro-amphetamine (Dexedrine).

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The study found that males were prescribed stimulants more often than females. The male-to-female ratio was almost three to one (2.8:1). Prescriptions increased with the child's age, peaking at age 10 for males (9%) and at 8-11 years for females (3%), and declining thereafter.

The prescription pattern for each month was also examined. The range of monthly prescription rates varied from 1.5 to 2.2 percent. The number of prescriptions declined starting in May and continued through July. The decline is most likely due to treatment regimens that include medication only during the traditional school year.

Effective management of ADHD requires ongoing collaborative efforts between parents, children, schools, and health care providers. Health care providers should help families of children with ADHD understand the nature and management of this condition. A comprehensive evaluation is needed to establish a diagnosis for ADHD. This evaluation includes a thorough review of the child's medical history; a complete physical, neurological and mental health exam; a review of school records with teacher and parent observations; and, when indicated, standardized tests of specific learning skills.

For more information about ADHD, contact your child's health care provider or Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) at 801-537-7878 or go to www.chadd.org.

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